

Embedding Employability


Aim: Enhance the strategy of embedding employability skills into assessment and feedback in a new Level 2 course.

Gap between skills of university graduates & those in workplace (Hinchcliffe & Jolly 2011; Frankham 2016)

Role of university vs employer (Cranmer 2006)

- "...rejected teaching employability skills outright, and argued that it was not the task of the universities to provide 'training'.
- "...confidence that the academic quality of graduates, in conjunction with the degree studied, would ensure good employment prospects."
- Influence of career path: skills better learned at start of employment (Mason et al. 2003)

'Built-in employability' to inform development of assessment methods (Ferrell & Gray 2013)



Successful career planning starts early

Embedded careers programme for Life Science students in Years 1 & 2:

Year 1

- 6 lab practicals: 30 min exercise in each 3 hr session
- 2 lectures: 30 min in 1 hr session

Year 2

- 1 lab: 3 hr session
- 1workshop: 1.5 hr session
- 4 lectures: 1 hr sessions

Why students engage:

- Timetabled lab/workshop sessions ensure captive audience
- Teaching& Careers staff present
- Exercises recorded in laboratory manual/embedded inassessment

Or not...

- Assessment deadlines are higher priority
- Clearly identified careers activities are not attended eg. low attendance in careers focussed lectures

SSP Project Plan

STAGE 1

L3 Microbiology Focus group to investigate student engagement with employability session and feedback on assessments for skills development

STAGE 2

In-class L2 workshop, linking assessment & feedback to employability supported by an 'Assessing for Employability' tool

STAGE 3

Development of digital resources to support student learning, reflection and feedback

Stage 1. Focus Group Outcomes

Q) The most effective way to deliver employability skills




- A) Short sessions integrated into practical lab sessions; Guest speakers from industry from experts in the field

Q) Motivation/Drivers behind student engagement with employability sessions

- A) To learn about external opportunities

Q) How to use feedback on assessments to enhance skills development

- A) Feedback needs to be written in a style associated with skills development & feedforward; Improve communication so students receive feedback in the first place; little point on MCQ assessment due to limited feedback



Stage 2. Building skills portfolio workshop for L2 students


- Final lecture slot of L2 Micro course dedicated to students reflecting on skills obtained through in course assessment

Aim: Facilitate student group discussion around skills & experiences

Exercises:


- Developing a library of experiences for use in application & interviews
- Focus on specific transferable skills developed through assessments

STAR video: Fiona's advice

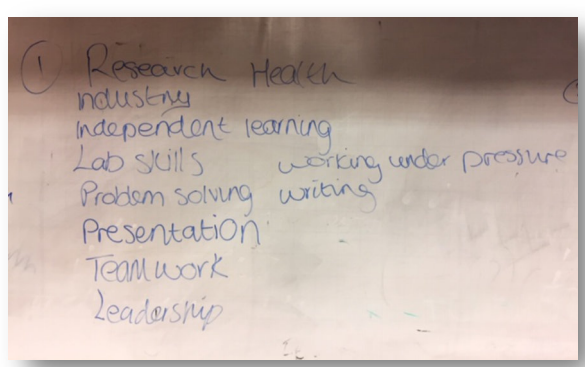


Situation Task Action Result

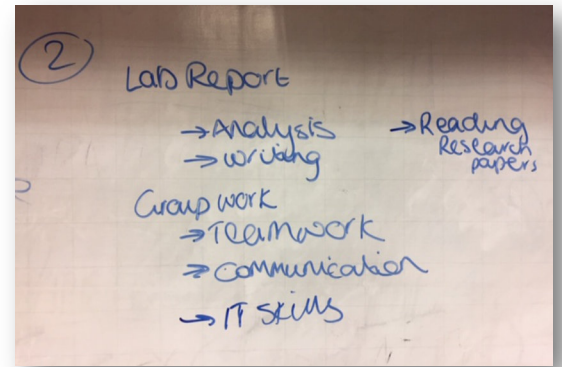
STARdiscussion: Miranda Dzachary personal experience from interview



Given the career path you are interested in, which skills have you developed throughout your course assessments?



Which of your piece(s) of assessment from this year do you think best demonstrates skills for career paths you are interested in?




Stage 3. Use of Assessing for Employability Tool

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Aims:

- Support student employability through improved focus on Graduate Attributes
- To increase awareness in both students and staff about the diversity of digital capabilities needed in the 21st century job market
- Support staff with updating their assessment practice to use more digital methods

Created in Articulate Storyline 2
Information sourced from School database & University good practice resource
Embedded in course Moodle site and EdShare



Stage 4. What's next?

Lessons learned:


- A necessity to improve communication with students
- Assessment requires student driven reflection
- Staff need to also write feedback in a skills focused way

Actions:

- Staff visit to Scottish Environmental Protection Agency - Microbiology lab leads to visit students in L2 course to link with focus group feedback


Next:

- Development of an Assessment & Feedback 'Fact or Fiction' guide
- Digital revision resources



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